

REVEALING THE INVISIBLE
HOW X-RAY ARTIST HUGH TURVEY
BRINGS EVERYDAY OBJECTS TO LIFE

TRAVEL
TEN PLACES TO
BAG AMAZING
PHOTOGRAPHS

EXHIBITION
INTERNATIONAL
BIENNIAL: OUR
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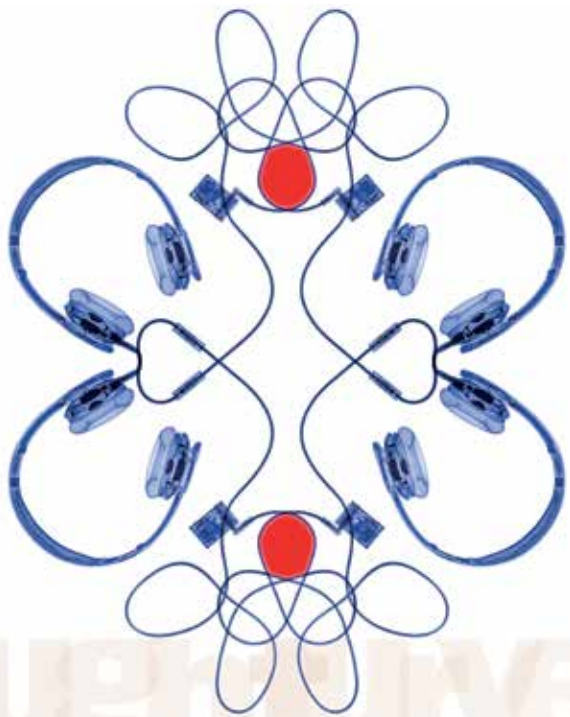
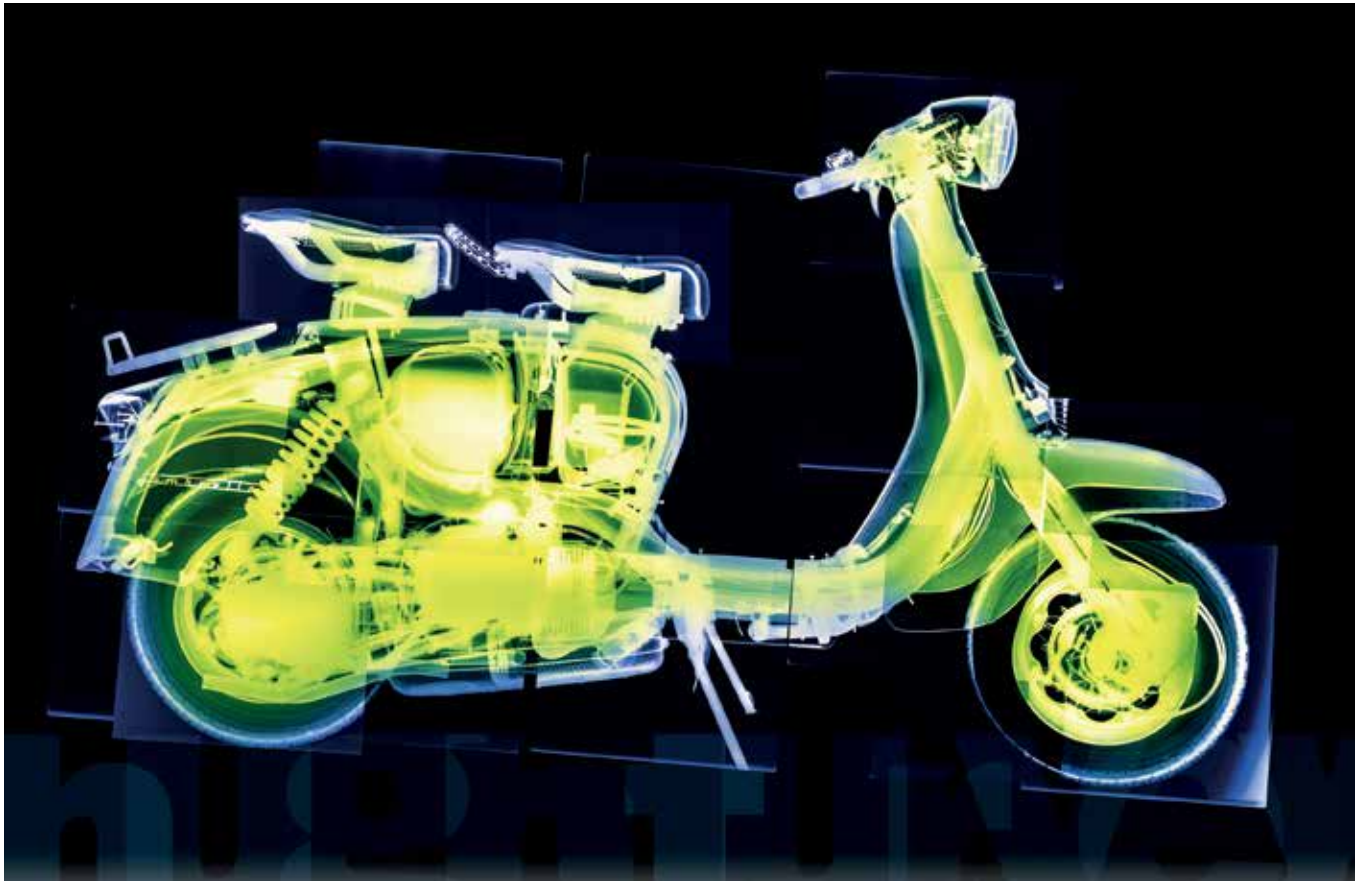




Honorary Fellow Hugh Turvey is renowned for his x-rays of everyday objects. Colin Pantall caught up with him on the set of the children's TV show

PICTURES BY PAUL STUART

FINALLY GETS HIS BLUE PETER BADGE



**PHOTOGRAPHER
PROFILE**

HUGH TURVEY

Hugh Turvey HonFRPS (b.1971) trained as a designer and art director, but on discovering photography changed tack and worked under rock photographer Gered Mankowitz. In 1996 he began dabbling with x-rays after being asked to create an album

cover. He went on to create Xograms for everything from Science Photo Library to Waitrose, and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by The Royal Photographic Society in September. He is artist in residence for the British Institute of Radiology and has created an app, x is for x-ray, available for iPads.

XOGRAMS © CUSTOMIMAGES/HUGH TURVEY



Clockwise from left: Hugh Turvey on the scooter he's about to x-ray; Xograms being digitised; the badge; Turvey with presenter Barney Harwood; inside the x-ray bay



Hugh Turvey's Xograms may be beautiful but the suite of offices and x-ray labs where he makes them is not. 'They're looking for stress factors in welding joints on aircraft,' Turvey says, 'and because that can have an impact on whether your plane flies or not, I appreciate the work that they do. I'm using their industrial technology but I'm manipulating it to an aesthetic.'

It's an aesthetic that has brought me to Turvey's workshop-cum-studio – along with a BBC television crew from children's favourite Blue Peter. They're filming him as he makes x-rays of fish, headphones and a classic Lambretta scooter. It's a friendly and strangely invigorating environment where the worlds of art, photography, science, industry and television form a very curious mix.

Pinned to a lightbox on the wall are some of the intricate Xograms (his modified take on the traditional x-ray) Turvey has made since he started x-raying in 1996 – superfine renditions that reveal the inner workings of flowers, toys and a grooming kit. Despite the delicacy of the results, x-raying is a simple process using three variables of time, depth and intensity to expose the 14 x 17 inch film.

'On the surface it is simple and under the surface it is simple,' says Turvey, who was in September awarded an Honorary Fellowship by The Royal Photographic Society for his work. 'It is a very rudimentary process of image capture. It's similar to putting an object on a photosensitive surface under the sun and getting a shadow from it.'

'The reason I've stuck with this



MAKING AN X-RAY HAS A HANDS-ON ASPECT, PART OF WHY I FELL IN LOVE WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

particular technology and fallen into using industrial equipment is because it's very much the same equipment that I was using right at the beginning. It's not lost its roots and tradition in early photographic film processes. Making an x-ray like this has a hands-on aspect to it which is part of why I fell in love with photography in the first place.'

The hands-on appeal is apparent when the Blue Peter crew begin filming a segment on x-raying a pair of sea bream. Barney Harwood, the jovial presenter, Emma, the producer, and researcher Ben all peer at the two fish as if to visualise what the x-rays will reveal, while Turvey's wife Artemi – a

food photographer by trade – inspects the edges of the fins. With the cameras and sound on, Turvey and Harwood take the fish into the x-ray bay, an isolated, shielded room which when the door is closed protects its users from radiation. They come out, the x-ray exposes an image on to a negative, and they go back and do it again. And again. And then we stand around for a bit. 'There's a lot of standing around when you're filming,' says Ben. But finally, with the fish in a final composition, Turvey and Harwood exit the bay, the x-ray film is exposed and ready for the darkroom, where it is taken out of its protective wrapping and placed in the developing machine. Eight minutes later it emerges, ready to be viewed on a special lightbox.

This is where the childlike wonder kicks in. Paul Stuart (the photographer) and I peer deep into the flesh and bones of the fish. 'There's not much that stops me in my tracks in photography,' says



Clockwise from left: Hit the switch in an emergency; Turvey works in the darkroom; checking the results on a special lightbox



IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS LIKE I HAD BEEN BLIND FOR ALL THESE YEARS

Stuart, 'but this does. It's amazing.' Turvey recognises the fascination from his early days making x-rays.

'In the beginning it was like I had been blind for all these years,' he says. 'Everything in here is constructed in some way that is hidden from us and x-ray allows you to push through the surface into the material of the object. It's like understanding the character of a person. Skin is the first thing that shows a person's expression, but when you get to know a person you look deeper and you get to know the person inside and it's that same process. I'm finding the personality in the objects.'

It is the "personality" of the objects that has brought Blue Peter here, in particular that of a 1961 Lambretta which has been part of a process where 20 individual x-rays are made, scanned and stitched into one 3GB file that will later be coloured; an example of Turvey's passion for an art that is intimately connected to science.

'Technology drives every art form,' he says. 'For example, when artists developed different blue pigments in painting, there was a science behind it that led to a succession of

developments in colour. It's the same in all arts. The creative possibilities are extended by science. There's nothing different in this process. I'm trying to help people see what I see, and if you can demonstrate visually the workings of an object then it's done.'

Turvey is using the immediacy of the visual in his educational work with the Institute of Radiology and the Wellcome Trust. 'There was a project we did at Yeovil District Hospital with The Wellcome Trust where we invited the public in, gave them access to the x-ray machinery and I helped them realise their hidden dreams of discovering things inside their everyday objects.'

It is not the only example of realising hidden dreams. For Barney Harwood the day filming with Turvey is a chance to explore his own love of photography; when they finish, Turvey presents him with a Royal Photographic Society badge, and a certificate from the British Institute of Radiology. Turvey, for his part, gets his long-coveted Blue Peter badge (after bringing his son into the studio for a peek behind the scenes). Turvey laughs: 'It's a milestone. Perhaps more for my eight-year-old ... but I'm very proud.'

Hugh Turvey's work will be on show at London Contemporary Art from 16 February - 7 March. Catch his work in Cheltenham, Gloucester and Dunbar during 2015. See xogram.com

INSIDE STORY

Hugh Turvey's three favourite Xograms



FEMME FATALE

My wife's leg, done in 1998. We would not be allowed to take an x-ray like that now because of health and safety – but the amount of exposure is nothing compared to a long-haul aeroplane flight. It's one of my first colour Xograms.



DIRTY WEEKEND

I called this dirty weekend due to the positioning of the feet, just my cheeky boy sense of humour. I did it for an exhibition in New York, got rid of the clothes and did it all in red. It looked great.

TO BE REVEALED ...

I haven't made it yet but I know what I want, using a printing technique that makes 3D x-ray into glass. They fire two lasers and where it hits it makes a dot in the glass. We want to make these glass monoliths with 3D images of the sea life you get in the Thames. We'll have the monoliths embedded in the Thames, so they're visible at low tide but disappear at high tide. It'll challenge you to go close.